

**James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, May 8, 1793.
Transcription: The Writings of James Madison,
ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons,
1900-1910.**

TO THOMAS JEFFERSON. MAD. MSS.

Orange May 8th, 1793.

Dear Sir

Your last recd. was of the 28 Apl. The rect of all the preceding is verified by the uninterrupted dates of the Gazettes inclosed. I anxiously wish that the reception of Genest may testify what I believe to be the real affections of the people. It is the more desirable as a seasonable plum after the bitter pills which it seems must be administered. Having neither the Treaty nor Law of Nations at hand I form no opinion as to the stipulations of the former, or the precise neutrality defined by the latter.¹ I

1 The President's proclamation of neutrality had appeared April 22. Madison wrote to Jefferson, June 10:

"Every Gazette I see (except that of the U. S.) exhibits a spirit of criticism on the anglied complexion charged on the Executive politics. I regret extremely the position into which the P. has been thrown. The unpopular cause of Anglomania is openly laying claim to him. His enemies masking themselves under the popular cause of France are playing off the most tremendous batteries on him. The proclamation was in truth a most unfortunate error. It wounds the national honor, by seeming to disregard the stipulated duties to France. It wounds the popular feelings by a seeming indifference to the cause of liberty. And it seems to violate the forms & spirit of the Constitution, by making the executive Magistrate

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the organ of the disposition the duty & the interest of the Nation in relation to War & peace, subjects appropriated to other departments of the Government. It is mortifying to the real friends of the P. that his fame & his influence should have been unnecessarily made to depend in any degree on political events in a foreign quarter of the Globe; and particularly so that he should have anything to apprehend from the success of liberty in another country, since he owes his pre-eminence to the success of it in his own. If France triumphs, the ill-fated proclamation will be a millstone, which would sink any other character, and will force a struggle even on his.”— *Mad. MSS.*

had always supposed that the terms of the Treaty made some sort of difference, at least as far as would consist with the Law of Nations, between France & Nations not in Treaty, particularly G. Britain. I should still doubt whether the term *impartial*, in the Proclamation, is not stronger than was necessary, if not than was proper. Peace is no doubt to be preserved at any price that honor and good faith will permit. But it is no less to be considered that the least departure from these will not only be most likely to end in the loss of peace, but is pregnant with every other evil that could happen to us. In explaining our own engagements under the Treaty with France, it would be honorable as well as just to adhere to the sense that would at the time

have been put on them. The attempt to shuffle off the Treaty altogether by quibbling on Vattel is equally contemptible for the meanness & folly of it. If a change of Govt is an absolution from public engagements, why not from those of a domestic as well as of a foreign nature; and what then becomes of public debts &c &c. In fact, the doctrine would perpetuate every existing Despotism, by involving in a reform of the Govt a destruction of the social pact, an annihilation of property, and a compleat establishment of the state of Nature. What most surprises me is, that such a proposition *shd. have been discussed.*

Our weather has not been favorable of late, owing more to want of sun, than excess of rain. Vegetation of all sorts even the wheat, nevertheless continues to flourish; and the fruit

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having no longer anything to fear from frost, we are sure of good crops of that agreeable article.

Yrs. Always & affy.

Will you send me a copy of the little pamphlet advertised under the title of an Examination of the proceedings in the case of the Secy of the Treay?